Coping with Bullying

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD

Some facts about bullying

- **Approximately 15% of students are subject to bullying on a daily basis. This means that in a class of 30 students, you can expect that between 4 and 5 students are bullied every day.**
- **No matter what you do, approximately 5% of young people will continue to be bullied throughout their school lives.**

Some facts about bullying

- Approximately half of all students report being bullied at some time.
- Both boys and girls nominate indirect relational bullying – spreading rumours, divulging another's secret, intentionally breaking up a friendship or group exclusion – as the most hurtful.
- Boys are more likely to experience direct physical bullying, including pushing, hitting and kicking.
- Girls are more likely to be the victims of indirect, non-physical forms of bullying, such as exclusion and having rumours spread about them.
- Direct verbal bullying, such as cruel teasing and name-calling is the most common form of bullying, with boys and girls experiencing this about equally.

Some facts about bullying

- Bullies are more likely to have a criminal conviction by age 24.
- 60% of bullies have criminal records and are more likely to engage in violent behaviour after leaving school.
- Aggressive behaviour at the age of eight is a powerful predictor of criminality and violent behaviour at the age of 30.
- Students who bullied at age 14 tended to also bully as adults and are much more likely to have children who engage in bullying.
- About 76% of bullying seems to occur between the ages of 10 and 14 years. The reported incidence of bullying reduces with age, with bullying beginning to reduce at around Grade 10 and to be greatly reduced by senior.

What is bullying?

- Bullying is **deliberate** psychological, emotional and/or physical harassment of a person. It can be by one person or a group. Bullying can either be physical - hitting, kicking, punching and so on; or it can be verbal - threats, name-calling, gossiping or ignoring; it can be face-to-face or via email, SMS etc.

How do you know if your child is being bullied?

If your child is being bullied you may notice the following:

- bruises, cuts, scratches, torn clothing that cannot be explained and complains about not feeling well;
- reluctance to go to school or requests to change schools;
- books, money, lunch or belongings stolen, damaged, scattered around or ‘lost’;
- excuses to avoid going to school, or insists that you take him/her to school even though you live close by;
- not sleeping well or is wetting the bed;
- frequently requests money;
- experiences a sudden, unexplained deterioration in class work and/or homework;
- does not participate in school activities/has no friends/stays near the teacher during breaks;
- appears anxious, insecure, distressed, unhappy, sad, secretive or has mood changes and seems more angry than usual;
- claims ‘I’m okay’ when questioned about obvious unhappiness;
- appears to have low self-esteem;
- is unhappy at the end of weekends or school vacation;
- has few friends and no friends in class and is not invited to birthday parties or other social activities;
- appears to be teased and laughed at by his/her peer group

What to do if your child is being bullied…

- Listen to your child
- Don’t over-react
- Tell them they are not alone
- Tell them you’re on their side
- Tell them that together you are going to work out a solution
- Help them get back control

The Anti-bullying formula

- **1: Analyse the bullying**
- Write it down
- **2: Ignore it if possible**
- **3: Decision Time**
- Report the bully or
- Confront the bully

Analyse the Bullying

- Write down what is happening
  - What is happening?
  - Who is doing it?
  - Where it is happening?
  - How often it is happening?
- Look for patterns in the bullying so you can avoid it
- Try to help your child take control

Ignore the Bully

- Act like a tree and calmly walk away from the bully
- Stand Tall. Try not to show you are upset – bullies love this
- Don’t fight back – it usually makes things worse
- Try to avoid risk situations
- Talk to a friend about it/get a buddy
- Forget about it by doing something you enjoy

Report the Bully

- **Secrecy just increases a bully's power; and ignoring bullying condones it.** If someone is being assaulted in the streets, children agree it should be reported to the police. If a child is being bullied at school the same applies. It is most important for children to know that **bullying is never acceptable.**

Reporting Bullying

- **Report to the teacher in writing with specific examples and request an interview**
- **Keep a record of the interview and send a copy to the teacher**
- **If no change –**
- **Follow the same steps with the Principal**
- **If no change, follow the same steps with the Board**

The Interview

- Reiterate where and when the bullying is happening and name the bully if known
- Tell the teacher how the bullying is affecting your child
- Make it clear that you want the bullying to stop
- Ask the teacher how she intends to proceed
- Get some clear commitments from the teacher before you leave the meeting
- Give the teacher some time to try to sort out the problem but put a time limit on this – for example, 48 hours
- Tell the teacher you will ring her in 48 hours to see how things are progressing.

The Interview

- Interview with the Principal
- Let the principal know that you have been working with the teacher. Make it clear that the teacher has been cooperative (if that is the case) but has not been able to stop the bullying
- You now want the principal to intervene
- Explain in detail what you want the outcome of your meeting to be, e.g. you want the bullying to stop, you want the bully spoken to/punished/made to understand how hurtful bullying is
- You may want counselling for you child
- You want the school to review its anti-bullying policy ((this is however a sideline to what you <u>really</u> want, the bullying to **stop**).
- **Approach the P & F**
- Explain bullying is occurring
- the victims are becoming stressed
- the problem cannot be ignored
- a whole school approach is required – students, teachers, parents and most importantly, the onlookers

Confront the Bully

- Tell your child:
- When the bully is alone or when in a room with the teacher:
- Be assertive - look and sound confident even if you feel awful inside
- Do not comment on the bully's personality
- Say:
  - what the bully is doing
  - how it makes you feel
  - what you want to happen.
- For example, 'When you shove me into the locker it hurts, and it makes me feel bad. I want you to stop'.

CYBERBULLYING

- Cyber bullying is sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet or other digital communication devices.

Some general precautions:

- If your child is regularly using technology tell him/her:
- to be careful who they give their telephone number to or their online handle;
- never give out or share personal information numbers (PINS);
- don’t believe everything you read online – just because someone tells you they are fifteen, it doesn’t mean they are telling the truth;
- never send a message to others when you are angry. Remind them that what they write becomes available in cyberspace and cannot be taken back;
- never open a message from someone they don’t know;
- be polite in your online or text message dealings; and
- **never** arrange to meet someone you have met online unless you take your parents with you.

If your child is being bullied, tell them...

- not to respond to cyber-bullying messages as this is only likely to encourage the bully. Bullies **want** you to respond;
- to report the bullying to you and to their teachers;
- not to erase or delete messages from cyber bullies even if they really don't want anyone else to see what is written – these messages may reveal clues about who has written them;
- children should never be ashamed to tell someone if they receive a frightening message. **It's not their fault** that there are some very strange people in the world; and
- to report that they have received a bullying message to your ISP (Internet Service Provider). If you forward the message to your provider, it may be able to trace the sender.

Useful websites

- www.cyberbullying.ca - a Canadian site dedicated specifically to cyber bullying, and including information on how you can track the owners of an email address
- www.netalert.net.au – Australian government site which provides advice on general internet safety
- http://www.netalert.net.au/01549-What-are-Internet-Acronyms.asp

Positive Action for Parents

- Improving confidence and self-esteem
  - Drama lessons
  - Make a list
  - Positive feedback
  - Positive affirmation
  - Martial arts
  - Assertiveness training/martial arts
- Building Resilience

Building Resilience

- Parents can help their children build resilience by:
- Helping them grow in self-esteem and independence
- Developing their skills to control their environment so that they do not feel helpless
- Allowing them to make mistakes (and being around to pick up the pieces)
- Allowing them time to solve their own problems
- Discouraging them from seeing themselves as ‘victims’.

United Nations Declaration

- *The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration.*